The Palestinian Nakba: Roots, Events

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(In the history of the Palestinian question, 1882–2023)

Introduction

Studying the Palestinian question faces major methodological challenges, as it is intertwined with conflicting national narratives, moral judgments, and political biases. This work aims to offer a balanced historical reading, grounded in academic documentation, that examines diverse accounts and analyzes events within their international and regional contexts, while also considering the human and ethical dimensions.

Chapter One: The Distant Roots (1882–1918)

1.1 Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period

Until the late 19th century, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, administratively divided into several provinces. Its population was predominantly Muslim Arab, with Christian and Jewish minorities who had lived in the holy cities for centuries. There was no Jewish state or independent political entity; Palestine was simply part of the Ottoman Empire's administrative structure.

Critical analysis: In his book The Palestinian Refugee Question, Israeli historian Benny Morris argues that Palestinian society was a traditional, agrarian society lacking unifying national political institutions before the Mandate. In contrast, Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi points out that Palestine possessed a distinct Arab identity, and that the Jewish presence was local and peaceful.

1.2 The Emergence of the Zionist Movement

With the rise of European nationalism and antisemitism, calls for a Jewish homeland emerged. Theodor Herzl rose to prominence as the leading theorist, publishing his book The Jewish State (1896), which advocated for the establishment of a Jewish state recognized by the major powers. The First Zionist Congress convened in Basel (1897) and formulated a political program aimed at:

· Encouraging organized migration.

· Buying land.
· Establishing economic institutions.
· Seeking international recognition.

Differing viewpoints:

· The Zionist narrative: It sees the movement as a national liberation movement for an oppressed people, which sought to solve the problem of Jewish refugees by creating a safe homeland.
· The Palestinian narrative: views the movement as a settler-colonial project aimed at displacing the indigenous population.
· Critical academic narrative (such as Ilan Pappe in The Zionist Genocide): describes the project as settler colonial, using modern tools of power to achieve its goals.

1.3 Beginnings of Jewish Immigration and Settlement

The period 1882–1914 witnessed waves of organized Jewish immigration (the First and Second Aliyahs), accompanied by:

· Purchasing land from absentee landlords or from the Ottoman government.
· Establishing agricultural settlements (kibbutzim and moshavim).
· Establishment of financial funds (such as the Jewish National Fund, 1901).
· Establishing independent educational and economic institutions.

Critical analysis: In his book Palestinian Identity, historian Rashid Khalidi argues that these migrations aroused Arab fears of demographic change, leading to early local protests (such as the petitions of 1891). In contrast, historian Anita Shapira, in The Zionist Transformation, argues that the migrations were vital for the revitalization of Jewish life in Palestine.

1.4 World War I and Parallel Agreements

World War I (1914–1918) represented a major turning point. The Ottoman Empire entered the war on the side of Germany, while Britain:

· Gained Arab support through the Hussein–McMahon Correspondence (1915–1916), which promised the Arabs independence in exchange for revolting against the Ottomans.
· Reached an understanding with the Zionist movement through the Balfour Declaration (1917), which declared Britain's support for the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people in Palestine."
· Concluded the Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916) with France to divide spheres of influence in the Levant.

Critical analysis: Historian Albert Hourani argues that these agreements represented the pinnacle of colonial hypocrisy, as Britain's promises to the Arabs, Jews, and French contradicted each other. Israeli historian Yigal Yadin, however, views the Balfour Declaration as a diplomatic achievement for the Zionist movement.

Chapter Two: The British Mandate and the Struggle for Identity (1919–1939)

2.1 Establishing the British Mandate

Following the San Remo Conference (1920), Britain was granted the mandate over Palestine, and the League of Nations adopted the Mandate Instrument (1922), which included:

· Implementing the Balfour Declaration.
· Facilitating Jewish immigration.
· Recognizing the Jewish Agency as the representative of the Jews.
· Protecting the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities (in the absence of Arab representative institutions).

Critical analysis: In The Shadow Army, historian Tom Segev argues that the British administration was not neutral but rather facilitated the establishment of a Jewish state while neglecting Arab demands. Conversely, in A History of Israel, historian Martin Gilbert contends that Britain implemented the Mandate in good faith but faced difficulties in reconciling its conflicting obligations.

2.2 The Rise of Jewish Immigration and the Growth of Zionist Institutions

The 1920s and 1930s saw a steady increase in the number of Jewish immigrants (especially after Hitler came to power in 1933). Zionist institutions developed:

· Independent educational and health institutions.
· Labour unions (Histadrut).
· Defence forces (Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi).
· Financial and economic networks.

Critical analysis: Historian Shlomo Amar argues that these institutions formed the nucleus of the state, while Palestinian historian Nur Masalha argues that these policies led to the economic and political marginalization of Arabs.

2.3 The Palestinian National Movement and Revolutions

Palestine witnessed escalating confrontations:

· Disturbances of 1920–1921 (Jerusalem, Jaffa).
· The Buraq Uprising (1929) over the Western Wall, which resulted in deaths and injuries, and led to the formation of an international commission that recognized the rights of Muslims to ownership of the wall.
· The Great Palestinian Revolt (1936–1939), which began with a general strike and turned into armed resistance, demanded:
· Stopping Jewish immigration.
· Preventing the transfer of land.
· Establishing a national government.

· Termination of the mandate.

Critical analysis: Historian Taysir Aruri argues that the revolt was the largest national liberation movement in Palestine, but it was thwarted by British military superiority and internal divisions. Israeli historian Yaakov Roy, however, believes that the revolt demonstrated the Palestinians' capacity for organization, but ultimately failed to achieve its goals.

2.4 The Peel Commission and the White Paper (1937–1939)

The Peel Commission (1937) recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, with Jerusalem remaining under British administration. The Palestinians rejected the partition, while the Zionist leadership initially accepted it. In 1939, Britain issued the White Paper, which restricted Jewish immigration and imposed limitations on land sales, and indicated the possibility of a Palestinian state within ten years. The Zionist movement rejected the White Paper, viewing it as a retreat from the Balfour Declaration.

Critical analysis: Historian Avi Shlaim argues that the White Paper was a belated British attempt to appease the Arabs, but it came too late. Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi, however, believes it failed to address the consequences of previous Mandate policies.

Chapter Three: From World War II to Partition (1939–1947)

3.1 World War II and Its Effects

Palestine became an important British military base. Thousands of Jews joined the British Army and gained military and organizational experience. Local industries and supply networks developed. In contrast, Palestinian society suffered the effects of the suppression of the Great Revolt.

Critical analysis: Historian Martin van Creveld believes that World War II was a qualitative leap in Zionist military capabilities, while Palestinian historian Abdullah Hourani believes that it weakened the Palestinian national movement.

3.2 Escalation of Zionist Operations Against Britain (1944–1947)

Zionist armed organizations (Irgun, Lehi) carried out operations against British targets (such as the bombing of the King David Hotel in 1946), with the aim of forcing Britain to end the mandate and open up immigration.

Critical analysis: British historian John Bull describes these operations as terrorist, while Israeli historian Meir Bay sees them as national liberation operations.

3.3 The United Nations and the Partition Resolution (1947)

Britain referred the matter to the United Nations, and the UNSCOP committee was formed. The majority recommended the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, and the internationalization of Jerusalem. Resolution 181 was adopted on November 29, 1947. It was accepted by the Zionist leadership and rejected by the Arab and Palestinian leaderships.

Critical analysis: Historian Michael Warshaw views the resolution as an international attempt to resolve the conflict, but one that was unfair to the Arabs in terms of geographical distribution. Israeli historian Yitzhak Rabin (in his memoirs), however, sees it as providing international legitimacy to the Jewish state.

Chapter Four: The 1948 War and the Nakba (1947–1949)

4.1 The Civil War (1947–1948)

Immediately after the decision was issued, clashes broke out between Jewish forces and Palestinian factions. Both sides focused on controlling roads and mixed cities. The period witnessed:

· Plan Dalet (March 1948): An Israeli military plan to secure the areas designated for the Jewish state, control supply routes, and clear strategic areas of Arab presence.
· The Battle of Al-Qastal (April 1948) and the killing of Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini.
· The Deir Yassin attack (April 9, 1948) carried out by the Irgun and Lehi, which resulted in the killing of a large number of civilians, sparking panic that led to a mass exodus.
· The fall of Haifa and Jaffa into the hands of Jewish forces.

Critical analysis: Historians disagree about the role of Plan Dalet in the displacement:

· Benny Morris (the new Israeli historian): He believes that the plan was primarily military, but its implementation led to displacement in the context of the war.
· Ilan Pappe (the new Israeli historian): He sees it as a systematic plan of extermination and ethnic cleansing, as in his book The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine.
· Walid Khalidi believes that it was part of a settlement project aimed at changing the demographic composition.

Palestinian displacement (the Nakba):

By May 14, 1948, approximately 300,000 Palestinians had been displaced or forced to flee their towns and villages. The reasons for displacement varied: direct fighting, fear, evacuation orders, and massacres such as Deir Yassin.

4.2 Arab Intervention and the Declaration of the Establishment of Israel (May 1948)

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel. On May 15, the regular Arab armies (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon) entered Palestine.

The declared objectives of the Arab intervention were:

· Preventing the implementation of partition.
· Protecting Palestinians.
· Establishing an Arab state in Palestine.

However, political and military differences between Arab states weakened coordination.

Critical analysis: Historian Ahmed Khalifa argues that Arab intervention was hesitant and inconsistent, allowing Israel to expand its control. Israeli historian Gideon Pardo, however, views the Arab armies as an existential threat to the nascent state.

4.3 Stages of War and Truces

· First truce (June 1948): The Israelis used it to strengthen and train their forces, and to receive new arms shipments.
· Israeli military operations (July–October 1948): expanded control over the Galilee and the Negev.
· Second truce (July 1948): was followed by repeated violations.
· The assassination of mediator Bernadotte (September 1948) by Lehi, which provoked international condemnation.

4.4 Armistice Agreements (1949)

Israel signed separate armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria. The armistice lines (the Green Line) became de facto borders, with Jerusalem remaining divided.

4.5 Results of the 1948 War

· Israel controlled 78% of the area of Mandatory Palestine.
· 700,000–750,000 Palestinians were displaced or forced to flee (according to United Nations estimates).
· The West Bank came under Jordanian administration, and the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration.
· Hundreds of Palestinian villages were destroyed or evacuated.
· Hundreds of new settlements were established on Palestinian land.

Critical analysis:

· The New Israeli Historians (Morris, Pappe, Shlaim) acknowledge the forced displacement, but they disagree about its intent.
· Palestinian historians view it as a national catastrophe (the Nakba) perpetrated by Israel with the help of international silence.

Chapter Five: After the Nakba (1949–1967)

5.1 The Refugee Issue and UNRWA

The United Nations established UNRWA (1949) to provide relief and employment for Palestinian refugees. The refugee issue has become a central focus of the conflict, with Palestinians insisting on their right of return, while Israel rejects it.

Critical analysis: Historian Onur Avni argues that the refugee issue replicates global patterns of displacement due to wars, but has become the longest refugee crisis in modern history.

5.2 Absentee Property Law (1950)

Israel passed the Absentee Property Law, placing the property of Palestinians who left during the war under official administration, and used a large part of it to house Jewish immigrants, sparking ongoing legal controversy.

5.3 The Situation Inside Israel

Around 150,000 Palestinians remained within Israel's borders and later obtained citizenship, but they lived under military rule until 1966, with restrictions on movement, property ownership, and political activity.

5.4 Regional Developments

· The July 23, 1952 revolution in Egypt and the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser.
· The Suez Crisis of 1956: Israel's occupation of Sinai and Gaza, followed by withdrawal under US-Soviet pressure.
· The founding of the Fatah movement (1959) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (1964).

Chapter Six: The 1967 War and Aftermath

6.1 The Six-Day War

On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a preemptive attack on Egypt, then Jordan and Syria. The war ended with Israel controlling:

· The West Bank.
· East Jerusalem.
· The Gaza Strip.
· Sinai (until 1982).

· The Golan Heights.

Critical analysis: Historian Momen Mohammed believes that the war was the result of an ill-considered Arab escalation, while Israeli historian Eli Harel sees it as a preemptive defensive operation.

6.2 Resolution 242 (1967)

It called for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied in the conflict, recognition of the right of all countries in the region to live in peace, and a just settlement to the refugee problem.

6.3 A New Wave of Displacement (1967)

Some 300,000 Palestinians were displaced from the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights, exacerbating the refugee crisis.

6.4 The Rise of Palestinian Resistance

The period 1967–1982 witnessed the emergence of Palestinian factions as a major military and political force:

· The Battle of Karameh (1968) boosted the morale of the resistance.
· The events of Black September (1970) led to the organisation's departure from Jordan to Lebanon.
· The October War of 1973 opened the door to negotiations with a change in the balance of power.
· Arab recognition of the PLO (Rabat Summit 1974) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.
· The Israeli invasion of Lebanon (1982) and the organisation's departure to Tunisia.

Chapter Seven: The First Intifada and Negotiations (1987–1993)

7.1 The First Intifada (1987–1993)

It erupted in the Gaza Strip and spread to the West Bank, characterised by its popular nature (strikes, demonstrations, boycotts, civil disobedience). The Hamas movement emerged during this period (late 1987).

Critical analysis: Historian Sari Nusseibeh argues that the uprising redefined the Palestinian issue as a civil rights issue, while Israeli historian Zeev Schiff argues that it surprised Israel and exposed the limits of military rule.

7.2 Declaration of Independence (1988)

The Palestinian National Council in Algeria declared the establishment of the State of Palestine, and accepted Resolutions 242 and 338, thus opening the door to a political solution.

7.3 Madrid Conference (1991)

The first direct negotiations between Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

7.4 Oslo Accords (1993)

Mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, and the establishment of a transitional Palestinian Authority, with the postponement of final status issues (Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements).

Critical analysis: Historian Rashid Khalidi believes that Oslo was a temporary solution that did not address the core issues, while Israeli historian Ron Ben-Yishai sees it as a historic opportunity lost due to extremism on both sides.

Chapter Eight: From Authority to the Second Intifada (1994–2005)

8.1 Establishment of the Palestinian Authority

The Palestinian Authority was established in 1994 as a transitional authority administering parts of the West Bank and Gaza. The agreements came into effect amid significant internal opposition.

Critical analysis: Historian Nathan Brown argues that the Palestinian Authority has become a security apparatus subservient to Israel under the continued occupation.

8.2 The Assassination of Rabin (1995) and the Slowdown of Peace

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist, which disrupted the peace process.

8.3 The Second Intifada (2000–2005)

It erupted in September 2000 following Ariel Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque. It became more violent, with Palestinian armed operations, large-scale Israeli military operations (Operation Defensive Shield 2002), and the construction of the separation barrier.

Critical analysis: Historian Hussein Agha believes that the uprising was a result of the failure of Oslo, while Israeli historian Tom Segev believes that it demonstrated the impossibility of a military solution.

8.4 Withdrawal from Gaza (2005)

Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and evacuated the settlements, while retaining control over the crossings, airspace, and waters.

Chapter Nine: The Division and the Gaza Wars (2006–2023)

9.1 The Palestinian Division (2006–2007)

Hamas won the legislative elections (2006), then seized control of Gaza (2007) after clashes with Fatah. A tight blockade was imposed on the Strip.

9.2 Wars on Gaza

· Operation Cast Lead (2008–2009).
· Operation Pillar of Cloud (2012).
· Operation Protective Edge (2014).
· Operation Sword of Jerusalem (2021).
· Operation Al-Aqsa Flood (2023), and the subsequent Israeli war.

Critical analysis: Human rights organisations argue that these wars cause significant civilian casualties and raise questions about compliance with international humanitarian law. Israel says its objectives are to dismantle Hamas's military capabilities and rescue captives.

Chapter Ten: Core Issues Without Resolution

· Final borders: 1967 lines versus Israeli annexation.
· Jerusalem: its religious, political, and legal status.
· Refugees: The right of return in exchange for compensation.
· Settlements: their legitimacy, number, and impact.
· Security and water resources.
· The form and future of the Palestinian state.

Chapter Eleven: Influential International Documents and Resolutions

British correspondence:

1. The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence (1915–1916).
2. The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916).
3. The Balfour Declaration (1917).

Mandate documents:

· San Remo Conference (1920).
· The Mandate Instrument (1922).

British inquiry committees:

· Shaw Commission, Peel Commission, White Paper (1939).

United Nations resolutions:

· Resolution 181 (1947): Partition.
· Resolution 194 (1948): Refugees and compensation.
· Resolution 242 (1967): Withdrawal and Peace.
· Resolution 338 (1973): Ceasefire.
· Resolution 478 (1980): Rejected the annexation of Jerusalem.
· Resolution 2334 (2016): Settlements are illegal.

Palestinian-Israeli agreements:

· Oslo (1993, 1995).
· Wye River (1998).
· Sharm El-Sheikh (1999).

Arab initiatives:

· The Arab Peace Initiative (2002).

Chapter Twelve: War Crimes

Judith Butler

Text 1: "I have been publicly criticizing the State of Israel. I have been describing this as genocide from the beginning. I did so on your show a year and a half ago."

Text 2: Judith Butler goes even further and argues that targeting civilians, especially children, amounts to what she calls a 'genocidal set.'

Text 3: As Judith Butler wrote in an article: "But what does it mean to speak out against genocide only to be censored? It means that the only defensible discourse is one that defends injustice."

Text 4: As Butler wrote: "The question of which lives are worthy of being mourned is an integral part of the question of which lives are worthy of being valued." Some sets of losses are more terrible than others.

Text 5: Judith Butler criticizes those who blame Zionist apartheid for contemporary violence, saying that "nothing should absolve Hamas of responsibility for the horrific killings it has committed."

Slavoj Žižek

Text 1: Philosopher Slavoj Žižek: "Israel needs this new war in Gaza to create Greater Israel. It is happening now, we see it."

Text 2: In his article entitled 'The Gentrification of Gaza', Žižek discusses how extremist Zionists are building the apartheid they desire.

Text 3: "Of course, Israel is acting in self-defense in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon. But it depends a lot on how 'self' is defined."

Text 4: Žižek compares Israel to the defunct apartheid regime in South Africa.

Noam Chomsky

Text 1: Noam Chomsky noted that "settler colonialism is the most extreme and brutal form of imperialism."

Text 2: "A literal genocide is unfolding in Gaza, facilitated by the dehumanization of black and brown bodies."

Text 3: "Israeli policy has evolved into a gradual and then accelerated genocide. Since Hamas won the elections in Gaza in 2006, Israel, with the full support of the United States, has implemented a policy of 'either leave or die' through regular deadly incursions."

Text 4: "Does this mean the end of Israel's immunity? Or will the memory of the Nazi genocide continue to be Israel's ultimate shield?" Chomsky answers: "That myth was broken a long time ago. Every act of brutal violence further erodes Israel's position."

Michael Walzer

Text 1: "It is an important principle in just war theory that justice, although it excludes many methods of fighting, cannot exclude fighting itself – because fighting is sometimes morally and politically necessary."

Text 2: "Just war theory relies heavily on the distinction between combatants and civilians."

Text 3: "No country can tolerate indiscriminate missile attacks on its cities and towns."

Text 4: "There can be no direct attacks on civilian targets (even if the enemy does not believe there are civilians), and this principle is also a major restriction on attacks on economic infrastructure."

Text 5: Walzer argues in a New York Times op-ed that Israel's 'pager bomb' attack on thousands of Hezbollah operatives throughout Lebanon was an 'act of terrorism' because it failed to respect the 'distinction between combatants and civilians.'

Text 6: Walzer also cited the treatment of Palestinian detainees, saying there were 'credible reports of abuse' against them.

Giorgio Agamben

Text 1: "The cries of pain made by plants when they are cut or when they suffer from thirst. In Gaza there are no microphones."

Text 2: "They are reduced to what Agamben calls 'bare life': Palestinians are excluded, stripped of legal status and rights with respect to sovereign power."

Text 3: "The organizing principle behind the state of exception in Gaza is the separation, isolation, and confinement of a surplus Palestinian population in designated areas."

Text 4: Agamben argued that democracies use and abuse the idea of exceptions to justify their right to deviate from the rule of law.

Baruch Spinoza

Text 1: "Peace is not the absence of war, but a virtue, a state of mind, and an inclination towards benevolence, trust, and justice."

Text 2: Spinoza was critical of the use of religion in carrying out political actions. He might have questioned the religious justifications of both Palestinian extremist groups and the more extreme sectors in Israel.

Text 3: Spinoza valued freedom of thought and expression. He might condemn restrictions on freedom of expression and censorship, and support the right of Palestinians to tell their story and fight for their rights.

Text 4: Spinoza shows how obedience to a dominant authority requires pretense and deception. The pressure to pretend is central to a narrative about how repression severely weakens the conditions for meaningful communication.

Text 5: Spinoza's exploration of hatred and the mechanisms of power provides a framework for understanding how hatred can be used to justify mass violence, and how power can be exercised without hatred through the pursuit of justice.

Text 6: Articles such as 'Spinoza in Gaza!' and 'Gaza in Spinoza's Mirror' explore how Spinoza's philosophy of necessity and ethics of joy can reveal its deeper meaning in the face of destruction.

Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, Michel Foucault

Arendt: Her concepts of the banality of evil and dehumanization can be applied to the war in Gaza. The greatest evils are committed by ordinary people who obey orders without critical thought and consider their victims less than human.

Fanon: His writings in The Wretched of the Earth provide a framework for understanding Israeli colonial violence and Palestinian resistance. He argues that colonial violence is systematic violence aimed at destroying the human dignity of the colonized, and that armed resistance is a natural and legitimate response to this violence.

Foucault: His concept of biopolitics (power over life) explains how Israel manages the lives and deaths of Palestinians through blockade, restrictions on movement, and control of resources.

Chapter Thirteen: Summary and Recommendations

Established Facts

1. The conflict is rooted in a contradiction between two national projects on the same land.
2. The results of 1948 radically changed the demographic composition.
3. The refugee issue remains unresolved and represents the longest-running refugee crisis in the world.
4. The continued occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Jerusalem is at the heart of the conflict.
5. Settlements are illegal under international law and constitute a major obstacle to peace.
6. A just solution requires addressing the issues of: borders, Jerusalem, refugees, security, and water.

· The military solution has not succeeded and will not succeed.
· A political solution requires international will and serious negotiations.
· Ignoring Palestinian rights does not lead to peace.
· Extremism on both sides fuels the conflict.
· International law should be the foundation, not be exploited as a political tool.

The Need for a Fair Settlement

· The two-state solution remains the most internationally accepted framework.
· Jerusalem needs a special arrangement that recognizes the religious importance for everyone.
· Refugees need a solution that reconciles the right of return with compensation.
· Security must be mutual, not unilateral.
· Settlements need to be frozen or removed, and dismantled illegally.

The International Role

· The United Nations must play a more effective role.
· International courts can contribute to the enforcement of international law.

· Major powers must adopt balanced, not biased, policies.
· Civil society and human rights organizations are essential for monitoring violations.

The Palestinian issue is not merely a conflict over land; it is a struggle for identity, memory, and justice. It is a human rights issue, an international law issue, and a moral issue. Any lasting solution must recognize the rights of all parties and be based on equality, justice, and peace.

Chapter Fourteen: The Beating Heart of the Conflict

14.1 Jerusalem in History

Jerusalem is a city of immense religious significance for the three Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The Al-Aqsa Mosque (comprising the Dome of the Rock and the Qibli Mosque) is the third holiest site in Islam. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is the holiest site for Christians. The Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall) is the holiest site for Jews.

Critical analysis: In Jerusalem: One City, Three Religions, historian Karen Armstrong argues that the city has always been a place of coexistence and tension, and that the current conflict is not purely religious, but rather a national and political conflict that uses religion as a cover.

14.2 Jerusalem during the Ottoman and Mandate Periods

Under Ottoman rule, Jerusalem was an Arab city with a Muslim majority and Christian and Jewish minorities. During the British Mandate, Jerusalem became a center of national conflict. In 1947, the partition plan stipulated the internationalization of Jerusalem, but the war resulted in its de facto division between Israel and Jordan.

Critical analysis: Historian Tom Segev, in One Jerusalem, Two Jerusalems, argues that the division of Jerusalem was a compromise, but it did not last long.

14.3 Jerusalem in the 1967 War

In June 1967, Israel captured East Jerusalem and annexed the Old City. In July 1980, the Knesset passed the Jerusalem Law, which declared a unified Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, a move rejected by the international community in Resolution 478.

Critical analysis: Historian Rashid Khalidi argues that the annexation of East Jerusalem was a violation of international law, while Israeli historian Moshe Amirav argues that it was necessary for Israeli national security.

14.4 Jerusalem Today

Today, East Jerusalem is home to approximately 350,000 Palestinians, while West Jerusalem is home to approximately 200,000 Israelis. The city also includes Israeli settlements, such as Gilo, Ramat Shlomo, and Har Homa, which are considered illegal under international law. UNRWA and human rights organizations document the displacement of Palestinians from Jerusalem, home demolitions, and building restrictions.

Critical analysis: Human rights activist Jeff Halper argues that Israel's policies in Jerusalem are aimed at changing the demographic composition, while Israel says it maintains freedom of worship for all religions.

Chapter Fifteen: The Refugee Issue – The World's Longest-Standing Refugee Crisis

15.1 Figures and Statistics

By 2023, the number of Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA was approximately 5.9 million, distributed as follows:

· Jordan: 2.4 million.
· Gaza: 1.4 million.
· West Bank: 870,000.
· Syria: 560,000.
· Lebanon: 480,000.
· Other countries: 200,000.

Critical analysis: Researcher Leif Feinberg argues that UNRWA's figures are inflated due to the adoption of an expanded definition of a refugee that includes successive generations, while Palestinian researcher Salam Tamari argues that the figures underestimate the scale of the disaster.

15.2 Right of Return and Compensation

· Resolution 194 (1948) stipulated the right of refugees to return to their homes and receive compensation.
· Resolution 242 (1967) spoke of a "just settlement" of the refugee problem.
· The Arab Peace Initiative (2002) stipulated an agreed solution to the refugee issue.

Different positions:

· The Palestinian position: The right of return is non-negotiable; it is an individual and collective right.
· The Israeli position: The right of return is not applicable due to demographic changes, and compensation is the solution.
· International position: Supporting a compromise solution that combines limited return and compensation.

15.3 UNRWA – Role and Presence

UNRWA provides education, healthcare, and social services to more than 5 million refugees. Israel considers UNRWA an obstacle to peace because it creates a growing demographic reality, while Palestinians consider it a lifeline and a symbol of the right of return.

Chapter Sixteen: Settlements – An Obstacle to Peace

16.1 History of Settlement

Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza began after 1967, with the establishment of settlements in strategic areas. Settlement expansion increased significantly during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, particularly in major settlement blocs such as Ma'ale Adumim, Ariel, and Gush Etzion.

Critical analysis: Historian Jeff Halper argues that settlement was part of a colonial project to change the geographical reality, while Israeli historian Daniel Gutman sees it as a legitimate security and settlement necessity.

16.2 Legality of Settlements

· Resolution 2334 (2016) affirmed the illegality of settlements under international law.
· The International Court of Justice (2004) said that the separation wall in the West Bank is illegal and affects settlement activity.
· Israel rejects this view, arguing that the settlements are not an occupation but rather disputed territories, and that international law does not apply to them in the same way.

16.3 The Impact of Settlements on Peace

Settlements hinder peace because:

· The Palestinian territories are divided.
· They create a demographic reality that is difficult to change.
· They deprive Palestinians of natural resources (water, agricultural land).
· They create daily tension with the Palestinian population.

Chapter Seventeen: Lessons from Similar International Experiences

17.1 South Africa and Apartheid

Many activists and scholars have compared Israel to the apartheid regime in South Africa because of:

· A separate legal system for Palestinians and Israelis in the West Bank.
· Restrictions on movement and transportation.

· Land confiscation.
· Military government.

Critical analysis: Activist Desmond Tutu believes that comparing Israel to South Africa is legitimate, while Anthony Lewis rejects it because Israel is a democratic state for its citizens, whereas the apartheid regime practiced segregation within its sovereign territory.

17.2 Northern Ireland and Sectarian Conflict

Northern Ireland witnessed a conflict between Catholic nationalists and Protestants loyal to Britain, which ended with the Good Friday Agreement (1998), which established a political solution based on participation and equality.

Lessons learned:

· The solution requires political will and international mediation.
· Full equality and mutual recognition are prerequisites for peace.
· Disarmament must be reciprocal and internationally supervised.

17.3 Bosnia and Ethnic Division

The war in Bosnia ended with the Dayton Agreement (1995), which divided the country along ethnic and sectarian lines with a weak central government. The agreement did not address the root causes of the conflict, but it did end the war.

Lessons learned:

· A solution that satisfies all parties may fall short of perfection.
· International intervention may be necessary, but it is not sufficient.
· Reconciliation takes a long time.

Chapter Eighteen: Moral Philosophy – Additional Texts

Theodor Adorno

"An oppressive social system creates types of violence that cannot be addressed within the system itself."

"The most widespread form of barbarism is remaining silent in the face of injustice."

Application to Gaza: Adorno criticizes the international silence on the horrors of war, and points out that oppressive regimes produce cyclical violence that only ends with radical change.

Jacques Derrida

"Justice is not reduced to the law; justice is going beyond the law towards equality and dignity."

"Hospitality is conditional upon respecting others in their differences."

Application to Palestine: Derrida calls for a justice that transcends positive law, focusing on human dignity and the right of Palestinians to live in dignity and freedom.

Jürgen Habermas

"Moral truth is not determined by force, but by rational dialogue between equal parties."

"International law should be the basis for any settlement, but it needs moral and political support."

Application to Gaza: Habermas calls for a rational dialogue between Israel and the Palestinians, with respect for international law and recognition of the rights of both parties.

Charles Taylor

"Recognizing the other is a prerequisite for identity and for peace."

"Conflicts are often identity conflicts, not just conflicts of interest."

Application to Palestine: Taylor focuses on the identity conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, and that the solution requires mutual recognition of existence and identity.

Chapter Nineteen: The Oslo Accords – Details and Background

19.1 The Secret Oslo Negotiations

In early 1993, secret talks began in Oslo between Israeli and Palestinian officials, under Norwegian auspices. Behind the scenes, the two sides worked on drafting a declaration of principles.

Critical analysis: Political analyst Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) believes that the agreement was the best that could be achieved at that time, while critic Edward Said believes that it was a surrender to Israeli conditions.

19.2 Agreement Terms

· Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho.
· Establishing a Palestinian transitional authority.
· Negotiations on the final status after 5 years.
· The issues of Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements are left to final negotiations.

19.3 Reasons for Failure

· Failure to fully implement the agreements.
· Continued settlement activity in the West Bank.
· Violence escalated on both sides.
· The 2000 Camp David summit was a failure.
· Lack of trust between the two parties.
· Changes in leadership on both sides.

Critical analysis: Historian Onur Avni argues that Oslo failed because Israel wanted a unilateral peace, while the Palestinian Authority wanted to end the occupation.

Chapter Twenty: Regional and International Roles

20.1 United States

The United States is Israel's biggest political, economic, and military backer. It uses its veto power in the Security Council to shield Israel from critical resolutions. It has played a key role in peace negotiations, but is often accused of bias.

20.2 European Union

It supports a two-state solution and provides substantial aid to the Palestinians, but lacks direct political influence. It criticizes settlements, but does not take strong punitive measures.

20.3 Russia

It played a role in the peace negotiations (Madrid Conference) and supports a two-state solution, but it uses the issue as leverage in its relations with the West.

20.4 China

It adopts a pro-Palestinian stance, but focuses on economic interests with Israel and Arab states, and avoids direct involvement.

20.5 Arab Countries

· Egypt: The first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel (1979), and played a role in mediating between the Palestinian factions and Israel.
· Jordan: Signed a peace treaty with Israel (1994), and hosts large numbers of refugees.
· Syria and Lebanon: They support the resistance but are militarily weak.
· Iran: Supports Hamas and Hezbollah, and considers Israel a major enemy.
· Gulf States: Adopted a gradual normalization with Israel (Abraham Accords 2020).

Chapter Twenty-One: Detailed Timetable

Year Event
1882 Beginning of the First Jewish Aliyah (First Aliyah)
1897 First Zionist Congress in Basel
1901 Establishment of the Jewish National Fund
1917 Balfour Declaration, Occupation of Jerusalem
1920 San Remo Conference, Jerusalem riots
1922 Mandate Instrument, White Paper
1929 Buraq Uprising
1936–1939 The Great Palestinian Revolt
1937 Peel Commission and Partition
1939 White Paper, the beginning of World War II
1942 Biltmore Conference
1945 End of World War II
1946 King David Hotel bombing
1947 Partition Resolution 181, the beginning of the civil war
1948 Declaration of Independence of Israel, the Nakba, the entry of Arab armies
1949 Armistice Agreements
1950 Annexation of the West Bank to Jordan
1956 Tripartite Aggression (Suez)
1964 Establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization
1967 Six-Day War, Resolution 242
1968 Battle of Karameh
1970 Black September
1973 October War
1974 Rabat Summit, Arafat's speech at the United Nations
1975 Lebanese Civil War
1978 Operation Litani, Camp David
1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty
1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Sabra and Shatila massacre
1987 First Intifada, Founding of Hamas
1988 Declaration of the State of Palestine
1991 Madrid Conference
1993 Oslo Accords
1994 Establishment of the Palestinian Authority, Jordan-Israel peace agreement
1995 Oslo II, Rabin assassination
2000 Camp David Summit, Second Intifada
2002 Operation Defensive Shield, the beginning of the wall's construction
2004 Death of Yasser Arafat
2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza
2006 Hamas wins the elections
2007 Hamas takes control of Gaza
2008–2009 First Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead)
2012 Gaza War (Operation Pillar of Cloud)
2014 Gaza War (Operation Protective Edge)
2016 Resolution 2334 (illegality of settlements)
2020 Abraham Accords (Normalization with Israel)

2021 Gaza War (Sword of Jerusalem)
2023 October 7th attack, the Israeli war on Gaza

Chapter Twenty-Two: Glossary of Terms

Term	Meaning
Nakba	The Palestinian catastrophe of 1948
Naksa	The defeat of 1967
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
Haganah	Jewish defence organization before 1948
Irgun	An armed Zionist organization
Lehi	A more extreme armed Zionist organization
Palmach	Elite units of the Haganah
Plan Dalet	An Israeli military plan in 1948
Green Line	The 1949 Armistice Lines
West Bank	Palestinian territory occupied since 1967
Gaza Strip	Palestinian territory occupied since 1967
Separation Wall	An Israeli wall that divides the West Bank
Settlements	Israeli communities in the occupied territories
Right of Return	The right of Palestinian refugees to return
Two-State Solution	Two states, Palestinian and Israeli, side by side
One-State Solution	One state for all its citizens

Chapter Twenty-Three: Summary and Recommendations

23.1 What We Have Learned

· The conflict is complex, multi-dimensional, and has deep roots.
· The military solution has not succeeded and will not succeed.
· A political solution requires will and sacrifices from both sides.
· International law should be the foundation, not a tool for exerting pressure.
· The international community is responsible for supporting peace, not for freezing crises.
· Reconciliation requires time, effort, and participation of all parties.

23.2 Recommendations for a Solution

· Mutual recognition of the rights and legitimacy of both parties.
· A halt to settlement activity and a freeze on it as a condition for negotiation.
· A just solution to the refugee issue that reconciles the right of return with compensation.
· An international status for the city of Jerusalem that respects all religions.
· Mutual security arrangements that guarantee the safety of all parties.
· An effective international role (United Nations, European Union, United States, Russia, China) to ensure the implementation of agreements.
· Supporting the building and strengthening of Palestinian state institutions.

· Reconciliation programmes between peoples at the popular and official levels.

23.3 A Call to History

The Palestinian cause is not merely a conflict over land; it is a struggle for identity, memory, and justice. It is a human rights issue, an international law issue, and a moral issue. Any lasting solution must recognize the rights of all parties and be based on equality, justice, and peace.

The Nakba is not just a memory; it is a living reality experienced by millions of Palestinians today. The Nakba is not the end of history, but the beginning of a long struggle. Peace is not a dream, but a necessity and a possibility. What is required is will, courage, and humanity. The history of Palestine teaches us that injustice does not last, that truth does not die, and that peace is born from the womb of suffering.

Future generations will ask us: what did you do? What did you leave behind? The answer will determine the future of the region and the future of humanity.

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